

FEATURE – FARMERS NEED FOREIGN MARKETS AND DOMESTIC STABILITY

INTRO: Speakers at this year's Agricultural Outlook Forum pointed out the importance of overseas markets to U-S farmers and the need for financial safety nets at home. The U-S-D-A's Bob Ellison has more. (1:24)

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK TOLD THE AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK FORUM HELD JUST OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON D-C THAT THE EXPORT MARKET HAS NEVER LOOKED BETTER FOR FARMERS.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary: We're going to continue to aggressively promote the American brand of agricultural products around the world. In fact in the first quarter of 2011 our gross export numbers were the highest that they have ever been.

AND U-S-D-A CHIEF ECONOMIST JOE GLAUBER SAYS THAT EXPORT MARKET IS INCREASINGLY SHIFTING OVERSEAS.

Joe Glauber, USDA Chief Economist: This is the first time that China now is our number one destination for agricultural products. Twenty billion dollars estimated for 2011.

FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON SAID THE EXPORT MARKET IS STRONG AND THAT U-S FARMERS SHOULD NOT FEAR COMPETITION.

Fmr. President Bill Clinton: If every country in the world maximized its capacity for agricultural self sufficiency you would have less inequality, more social solidarity and the population's growing so fast there would still be enough hunger out there for all the American food we can grow.

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE CHAIRWOMAN DEBBIE STABENOW ALSO LAUDED THE GROWING EXPORT MARKETS BUT ADDED THAT FARMERS ARE ALWAYS VULNERABLE TO DOWNTURNS AND DISASTERS.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-MI: That's why one of the most important principles we need to address for the Farm Bill is creating the most effective safety net and the best tools for managing risk.

IN WASHINGTON D-C FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE I'M BOB ELLISON.